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# The Cuban Invasion—I

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## White House Decisions Cited in Study Of Why Landing in April Was a Failure

By HANSON W. BALDWIN

*This is the first of two articles on the unsuccessful attempt by anti-Castro forces to invade Cuba last April.*

The celebrations in Cuba last week deliberately emphasized the increasing strength of Premier Fidel Castro's pro-Communist state.

Part of the emphasis represents propaganda, but there is some truth behind the embroidered claims.

About three months after the United States sponsored abortive invasion of Cuba, Dr. Castro's regime

is stronger than it has ever been, physically, and in prestige.

In April, when 1,500 to 1,600 anti-Castro Cubans, with United States support, attempted to overthrow the Cuban Government, Havana had only nine operational military aircraft, all propeller-driven, except three jet-powered T-33 trainers that had been armed. The Cuban militia, then equipped with Czechoslovak and Russian small arms, about fifty Russian tanks and self-propelled guns and small amounts of field artillery, was impressive in quantity but not in quality.

About 200,000 men and women had been armed, but most of these were ill-disciplined and sparsely trained, un dependable against a good military force. About 15,000 to 20,000 regular Army and militiamen had received more training and could be termed a "hard core," although their combat effectiveness and dependability were open to question. There was, in April, a Cuban anti-Castro underground, and about 2,000 guerrillas scattered in the mountains all over Cuba.

Today, with the victory at the Bay of Pigs behind them, the Cuban armed forces are far more confident, less likely to defect, better armed and trained. Between twenty and fifty Soviet MIG-17 jet fighters have been delivered to Cuba and are now in operation. Heavy weapons, which may contain additional disassembled planes, have been seen. Some Cuban pilots have returned from training in Czechoslovakia. More arms and equipment for ground troops has been sent to Cuba from Communist countries.

### Guerrillas Are Inactive

The underground has been virtually quiescent; the guerrillas have been inactive; Dr. Castro's opposition is disorganized and downcast. The overthrow of Dr. Castro's Government would be far more difficult today, even if United States forces were sent into the island, than it would have been three months ago. And the United States Government apparently has no plan for eliminating what many observers have called the "cancer of communism in Cuba."

The April invasion has been widely ridiculed since its failure, and the Central Intelligence Agency and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been made the principal whipping boys. The impossibility of overthrowing Dr. Castro with 1,500 to 1,600 men appears self-evident; the rhetorical question, "How could anyone be so stupid?" has been a popular one around Washington in the last three months. Yet the operation in its original concept was not as stupid as it has been made to appear and the responsibility for the mistakes appears to be widely distributed.

The story of the Cuban venture, pieced together from talks with many Government officials and from other sources, postulates many lessons of major importance in the Berlin crisis.

### Planning Started in 1960

Planning for the Cuban assault started in the late spring of 1960, when former President Dwight D. Eisenhower authorized the Central Intelligence Agency to organize, train and equip anti-Castro Cuban refugees. Allen W. Dulles, Director of the CIA, and his deputy for operations, Richard M. Bissell, initiated the secret operation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military were not initially given any details of the plans for employment of the Cuban refugees, but as their training progressed the Pentagon was asked to assign officers to train cadres, weapons and equipment to the C. I. A. The plan was developed by the Joint Chiefs and later approved by the Administration. The plan was published in the United States